

Chemical fire non-toxic, ⁹⁻²³⁻⁸²⁻Los Angeles Times but special unit was ready

The Los Angeles County Fire Department hazardous waste unit was called to a fire at a Saugus explosives plant Thursday morning.

Officials were concerned that the fire, which caused about 6,000 pounds of ammonium perchlorate to explode, would leave toxic smoke clouds over parts of Newhall and Saugus, said Capt. Donald E. Kanallakan, of the department's Newhall station. The explosion was at Bermite Co., on Soledad Canyon Road.

No injuries were reported and toxic waste experts determined that the smoke was not toxic, Kanallakan said. Firefighters, however, could not enter the area for about 15 minutes, until the explosions that were heard

for several miles had subsided.

Besides burning 30 barrels of ammonium perchlorate, a solid substance used to make jet and rocket fuel, the fire charred a 1,200-square-foot wooden shed and about one acre of grass, company President Douglas B. Moore said.

He estimated damages at \$25,000.

Flames erupted at 8:15 a.m. when two employees were mixing the chemical in a remote area behind the plant.

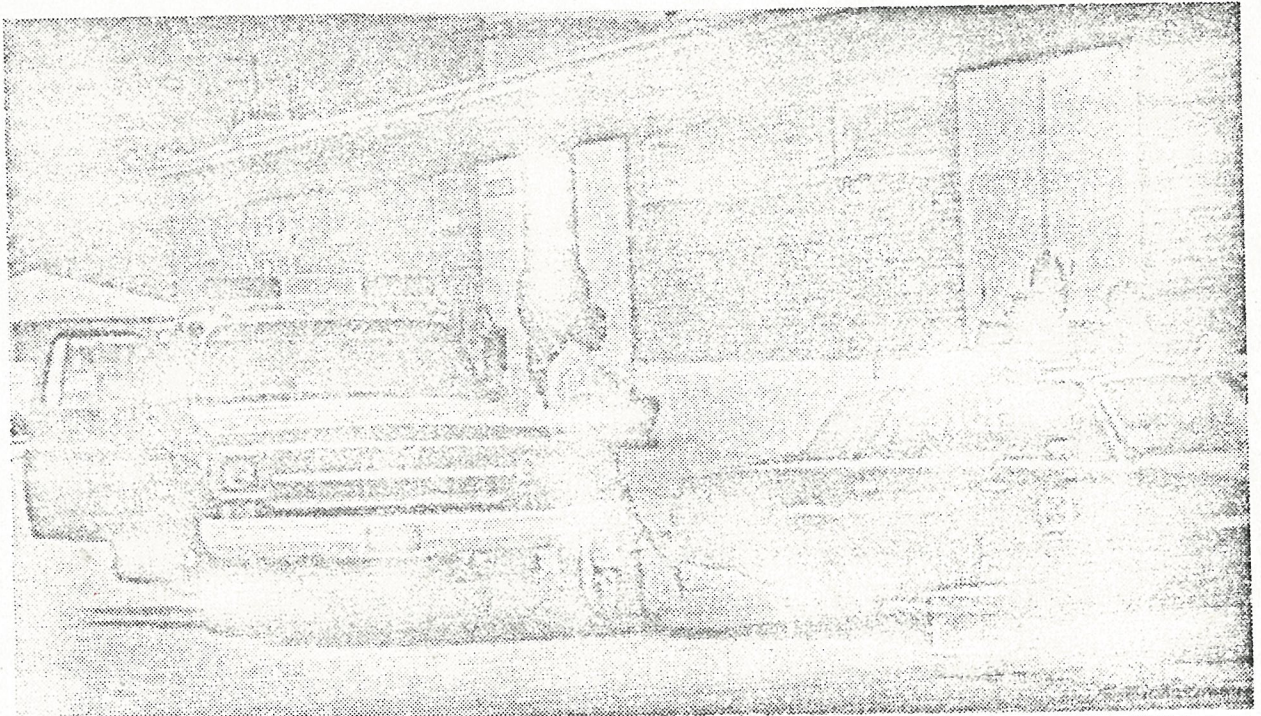
The fire apparently was caused by a spark from materials on a storage oven door that heated when the workers opened the door as part of their cleanup process, Moore said.

He said this is the first time the chemical has been involved in a fire at the plant. Work with explosive materials is done in remote areas in case there is such a problem. Brush is removed from about 15 feet around work sites, he said.

The two workers mixing the chemicals tried to extinguish the fire themselves, but when they were unable to do so, they reported it to company officials, who called firefighters.

In case the smoke had been toxic, a disaster coordinator from the American Red Cross Service Center in Valencia was sent to assist if an evacuation proved to be necessary.

— PATRICIA FARRELL
AIDEM



UPI Telephoto

Firefighter carries breathing apparatus during explosion, fire at rocket fuel manufactur-

ing plant. Fortunately, clouds of toxic smoke failed to develop over Saugus, Newhall.